

OCI No. 2943/65

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
22 November 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Indonesian Army Attitudes Toward Communism

1. For six weeks the Indonesian Army has been engaged in a major campaign against the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI). Party members and sympathizers are being rounded up and interned by the military; others are being purged from local government positions; and in Central Java PKI adherents are reported to be shot on sight by the army. The army has risked much of its prestige and political future on this campaign. It wants to ban the PKI and to cripple the party permanently, but its attitude toward Marxism is far more complicated than simple anti-Communism.

2. The army has a long record of opposition to the PKI as a political force. In addition, some army leaders undoubtedly view Communism as an ideology which is essentially evil, totalitarian, and alien to the "Indonesian way of life." But this view is by no means universal. Army officers and enlisted personnel, like Indonesians in all other walks of life, have for the past several years been subjected to a fairly constant barrage of pro-Communist propaganda. This propaganda, echoed and often initiated by President Sukarno, has had its effect. While some army officers' beliefs are firmly rooted in a fundamentalist and essentially anti-Communist Moslem tradition, many others, particularly in the lower ranks, equally firmly consider themselves to be Marxist socialists. Nearly all army leaders, however, are united in regarding the PKI as a rival for power within Indonesia. They are at present engaged in a power struggle, not an ideological struggle, with the party.

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the army was anti-Chinese and anti-PKI, but not anti-Communist. This is a good capsule summary of the military's position, for clearly a large segment of the army is by no means opposed to Marxism per se. Indeed, officially the army gives full assent to the frequently stated proposition that the Indonesian revolution is a socialist revolution. Probably few army leaders would oppose some sort of state-controlled Marxist party, even one calling itself Communist, if this party were clearly nationalistic--that is, wholly oriented toward Indonesian national interests. The Yugoslav model is instructive in this regard.

4. The army leadership at present finds itself opposed to the PKI on a variety of grounds. First, the murder of a number of high-ranking officers in the course of the insurrection on 1 October has made it clear to the army leadership that its very survival may be at stake in the present struggle. Second, the PKI, with its high degree of political motivation and discipline, has developed an independent power structure that is not necessarily responsive to the organs of government. Finally, the army believes the PKI's ties to Peking make it in effect the agent of a foreign power. For all these reasons the army finds the PKI a threat to its own power position. But it also finds in these factors useful arguments in the propaganda war it is now waging against the PKI. It is claiming the party is out of phase with Indonesian ideals and a "traitor" to the Indonesian revolution, and is emphasizing Chinese Communist involvement in the 1 October uprising. This last argument is particularly effective, given the Indonesians' general antipathy to the numerous Chinese merchants living in their midst.

5. In pressing this campaign against the PKI, however, the army has had to tread a delicate path with respect to President Sukarno, who is not only emotionally committed to Marxism, but is also convinced that the PKI, with its high degree of discipline, is a unifying factor on the Indonesian political scene, where centrifugal forces have plagued the government from its inception. In addition, the army must consider Moscow's attitude. The Indonesian

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military establishment is almost totally Soviet-supplied, and the army is well aware of its dependence on the Soviet Union for spare parts, replacements, and ammunition.

6. Whatever its feelings about Peking, the army certainly wants no break with Moscow. It has been careful to exclude the Soviet Union from its recent denunciations of the PKI and of the Chinese Communists.

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7. Moscow has been playing the recent events in Indonesia in a low key in its current propaganda. It has been making the minimum noises necessary when Communist Party members are being harried and shot by government forces--criticism far milder, for example, than that directed at Iraq in 1963 when similar conditions obtained in that country. Arms deliveries have continued to reach Indonesia without interruption over the past six weeks. There is no indication that they will be cut off.

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The army leaders may also feel that continued evidence of Soviet good will, as expressed in uninterrupted arms shipments, may infuriate the Chinese Communists and lead to recriminations that the army could then use to advantage in its attempt to orient Indonesia away from Peking.

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9. The embassy suggests that in reaching an understanding with the Soviets on the arms shipment question the army may leave itself open to Soviet pressure to resuscitate the PKI along pro-Moscow lines. While this is possible, it is by no means likely. The army would not be happy at the appearance of a revivified Communist Party with strong ties to a foreign power, even if this power were Moscow rather than Peking. Furthermore, it is likely that the Soviets themselves do not particularly wish to become entangled in the thicket of Indonesian politics. They have before them the clear example of Peking's involvement in this manner--an involvement which has led to a diminution of Chinese influence in Indonesia. Moscow is primarily interested in close government-to-government relations with the Indonesians, and may well feel that its virtual arms-supply monopoly affords it greater influence on Indonesian policies than would a Moscow-oriented PKI, which the army may at some future date come to consider to be as great a threat to it as it does the present party. Government-to-government relations supplemented by the leverage of continued arms shipments and the training of middle-grade Indonesian officers in the USSR, gives the Soviets the same sort of influence they enjoy in Egypt.

10. Indeed, even the rehabilitation of the PKI as a "national Communist party" would prove difficult in present circumstances. While the army might have no ideological difficulties in accepting such a party, it has the present PKI on the run and almost certainly would like to destroy the party's organizational structure while it has the chance. It has made no attempt to cultivate the less militant element of the PKI that might be expected to form the core of a new party. In practice it has made no distinction between those elements directly involved in the 1 October insurrection and other "safer" party members when making arrests and purging local government machinery. Moreover, the PKI, like other traditional Communist parties, is organized from the top down, and its members are inclined to follow the lead of its constituted leadership.

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These leaders have international considerations as well as Indonesian interests in mind, and if forced underground would probably take a large portion of the more dedicated rank-and-file with them. On the other hand, the PKI has a strong nationalist coloration, and some lower level party members may eventually be induced to join a tame, government-organized and sponsored party professing Marxism. The army would, however, attempt to see that such a party did not have a real voice in governmental policy making.

11. Even a development along this line, however, presupposes a victory for the army in its present attempt to influence Sukarno to accept its view of the PKI as a threat to the Indonesian state. This outcome is by no means certain; the army may yet be outmaneuvered by the politically astute President. In the end, the army may be forced by Sukarno to acquiesce in a rehabilitation of the PKI, or to accept the party almost whole but reconstituted under a different name. For that which worries the army most--the PKI's tight organizational structure--is precisely what makes it so attractive to Sukarno. And while it is true that the army has gone further in present circumstances in pursuing its own ends, it has retreated in the face of presidential pressure before and may do so again.

12. Whatever the outcome of the present scramble for power, it is unlikely that there will be a major change in Indonesian foreign policy. Should the army emerge on top, Indonesian policies would probably be more genuinely neutral in balancing between East and West, and the tendency to follow Peking's lead in international affairs certainly would be reduced. However, no break with Moscow is in the cards, and the army would find it difficult to extricate itself from present foreign policy attitudes to reach a genuine rapprochement with the West. In part this is true because the army itself believes these policies to be correct, and in part because to reach an accommodation with the West would expose the army leaders to charges of "selling out to the neocolonialists" from leftist Indonesian elements independent of the PKI. Specifically, the

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army is deeply involved in confrontation with Malaysia and, despite some indications that its leaders are having second thoughts about this policy, it is unlikely that they can stand down on confrontation without a considerable loss of face. Furthermore, the army leadership, like Sukarno, would probably find confrontation a useful symbol around which to unify the many divisive forces at work in the archipelago.

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

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